

Dear Seekonk Residents:

As your Moderator I am encouraging everyone to attend Seekonk's Town Meeting. Our form of government allows your voice to be heard on matters that affect our every day life. You elect people to positions to do a certain job and the Town Meeting is one way to make sure they are doing their jobs in accordance to what you think is the best course of action. Seekonk is your community and the town officials want to hear from you to see how you want them to proceed into the future. You can have a say into how Seekonk grows and maintains its community atmosphere. The Town Meeting is spending your tax money don't you want to know where it is going?

I have compiled some information to make your participation in the Town Meeting more understandable. Please read the following to be better prepared to fully participate when you attend.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting and I hope you will come away with a better understanding of how our town operates and in what direction Seekonk is heading.

Respectfully,

Michelle A. Hines

Town Moderator

Seekonk

Town Meeting

“The town meeting conception of democracy is an idealized way of expressing the democratic hope that those who are governed will be able to reach those who govern them, that they will be able to make their voices heard where it counts and will be recognized as persons and not as faceless cogs in an efficient machine. It speaks for a belief that a society is safer and freer when the bulk of its citizens understand the programs and goals that their government has chosen and when they have achieved this understanding because these programs and goals have been honestly debated in public.”

-American Democracy: The Power of the Democratic Idea, Rockefeller Panel Report (1960)

PARTICIPANTS

Moderator: Elected for an unsalaried three year term. Principal duty, to advance the transaction of the Town’s business in an orderly manner and in such a way that the will of the Town Meeting is carried out.

Town Clerk: Records the minutes of each Town Meeting and maintains the official record of all votes taken.

Board of Selectmen: Serve as the Town’s executive authority, with overall responsibility for supervising Town affairs. Its role is defined by state law and the Town Meeting. The Selectmen have the power, and in the case of citizens’

petitions are required, to insert Articles in the Warrant: but only Town Meeting has the final authority to accept, reject or modify any proposal.

Town Administrator: Acts under the direction of the Board of Selectmen.

Town Counsel: Provides legal advice to the Moderator and the participants when required.

Finance Director: Present at all meetings to answer questions and keep track of the town's finances.

Finance Committee: Appointed by the Board of Selectmen and the Town Moderator present to answer and make recommendations on financial articles.

Registered Voters: You. Only registered voters are allowed to vote at the Town Meeting.

Prior to the Meeting

Articles are prepared and submitted to the Board of Selectmen for submission into the Warrant. Discussions are held at the Board of Selectmen's open meetings which can be attended by everyone.

Departments that submit articles will have meetings that interested parties can attend to give their constructive thoughts and ideas.

If you are interested in serving on a committee you can fill out a talent bank form which is available at the Board of Selectmen's office and if an opening comes available you will be contacted. But remember you have the right to attend the meetings even if you are not a member of the board or committee.

If possible try and get a copy of the warrant from the internet or Board of Selectmen's office so you have time to review the articles and come up with questions that you want answered before you vote at the meeting.

Meeting Conduct

The Moderator has absolute control of the conduct of the meeting within the limits of relevant Massachusetts statutes and Town by-laws. The Moderator is guided by Town Meeting Time, Johnson, Trustman and Wadsworth, Massachusetts Moderators Association, 3rd Edition (2001), a book of parliamentary procedure.

Residents who are registered voters will be allowed to vote on all articles.

Participants who wish to speak are required to raise their hands, wait to be acknowledged by the Moderator, stand with the microphone, state their name and address and direct their question/s to the Moderator. The Moderator will make every effort to get an answer to all questions.

Participants are asked not to use Proper Names in their questions or statements; they are to refer to previous speakers as the previous speaker.

The Town Meeting is a professional, respectable meeting of adults and all are expected to conduct themselves accordingly.

Meeting Procedures

The meeting will begin as soon as a quorum is achieved and it is 7p.m. Moderator will announce that the quorum requirements have been met and that the meeting will begin at 7p.m.

All will be asked to enter the meeting room and be seated.

The Town Clerk will open the meeting.

Seating instructions will be given by the moderator. Seating locations are set to make it easier to recognize those who wish to contribute to the meeting. Some procedures may be explained at this time.

After the opening of the meeting the moderator will begin reading the articles in the Warrant. All those attending the meeting need to have a copy of the Warrant in order to follow along with the meeting. The entire packet is called the Warrant and this contains the articles that are going to be discussed during the meeting. The Warrant can be located on the web site and is available at the town hall prior to the meeting, or you can obtain the Warrant at the meeting.

Each article will be read by the moderator, the main motion will be made on the article and seconded which will open up the article for discussion by the participants.

During the discussion period there may be subsidiary motions made to change the main motion. These motions will be acted upon at the time of issuance. If a resident wants to make a subsidiary motion, this motion has to be made and seconded prior to discussion on the motion. Once this is done then the person that made the motion will be allowed to explain why are recommending the change.

After the discussion is complete a vote will be taken on the article. The moderator will advise if a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is needed on each article.

This procedure will be followed on all articles until all articles have been acted upon.

Seekonk's procedure on the length of time the Town Meeting is to continue is handled at 10:30p.m. A vote will be taken to see if the meeting continues or is to be adjourned to the next reserved evening. If the meeting is adjourned, there can be no action taken on any of the articles that have already been decided until after the meeting is dissolved.

